

Kinship Quarterly

Strengthening Families

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Countdown to School

Welcome to the Kinship Quarterly. This issue features important information to keep children and youth safe as well as tips and resources to help you succeed as a kinship caregiver. If you need additional information about these or any other issues, please contact your kinship development worker.

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Get ready

Gather the documents you will need to enroll your child in school.

Call your school district office to ask exactly what school (elementary, middle, high school) the children at your address are to attend.

Call the school registrar at the assigned school. You want to ask:

- When is school enrollment?
- What documents do I need?
- Contact information for the Director of Special Education to begin services, if needed
- Contact information for the school counselor

For the initial enrollment in a new school district, you will need:

- ✓ Withdrawal Form from the last school the child attended
- ✓ (DFPS) Form 2085 KF -Placement Authorization -Verified Foster Caregiver
- √ (DFPS) Form 2085 E
 Education Decision-Maker
- ✓ Medical Consent
- ✓ Doctor's orders on any medications taken at school
- ✓ Birth certificate
- ✓ Immunization record
- ✓ Documents for special education and Section 504 services
- ✓ School transcripts
- Court orders establishing DFPS custody, by request.

2 Get set

Complete the paperwork

Form 2085 KF establishes your role as caregiver and the child's eligibility and enrollment for the free National School Lunch Program Form 2085E names the person, usually the caregiver, responsible for making education-related decisions.

FEATURED IN THIS ISSUE: SAFETY



"Opt out" in writing of the school using corporal punishment on your child

- Get back into the school year routine. That means 8-10 hours of uninterrupted sleep a night for children and youth. Start setting bedtime hours two weeks before school begins.
- Practice the route to school or what bus to take. Review the safety rules with child.
- Visit the school. Where's the cafeteria? Where's the bathroom? Where do I get the bus?
- Meet the teacher on Going Back to School night. Take the opportunity to meet the teacher, school staff, and classmates.
- Establish communications and access school portals. You can check your child's daily class progress, grades, upcoming events.



GO!!

Learn new things! Have fun!

If you need assistance, contact

Your Kinship Development Worker

School District Foster Care Liaison http://www.tea.state.tx.us/FosterCareSt udentSuccess/liaisons/

Making Sense of Family Group Decision Making

By Elizabeth Pontz, FGDM Specialist

Does it seem like CPS has its own language? Although I have worked in child welfare for most of my adult life, I am new to Texas and still learning what the Texas CPS words and acronyms mean! As the program specialist for Family Group Decision Making at state office, I hope to shed a little light on the FGDM program and help you figure out a few of those terms and acronyms.

Family Group Decision Making uses several types of meetings to bring together a family group to make plans and decisions that will ensure the child or young person's safety, permanency, and well-being. As a kinship caregiver, you are likely to be asked to attend a Family Group Conference, Permanency Conference and Circle of Support. These meetings have slightly different purposes and the attendees may vary. It is important for kinship caregivers to know what to expect at these meetings and their role.

Typically, the caseworker or the Family Group Decision Making coordinator will invite you to the meeting. They will explain the reason for the meeting and give the time and place. In some instances, they will spend time with you and the children gathering information and answering your questions in the days before the meeting.

If the meeting is for an older youth, the coordinator may meet with the youth in advance to determine who the youth wants to invite and to gather information before the meeting. If you have concerns about who is or is not invited, discuss this with the caseworker or coordinator before the meeting.

At the meeting, everyone is introduced, meeting guidelines are created and attendees sign an agreement to keep information shared private. You can expect to hear and share information about the current status of the child, family and child strengths, and any concerns. In addition, there will be discussion about ways to ensure the

child or young person is safe, feels a sense of well-being, and has strong connections to family and caring adults who can support them as they grow into adults. You can also expect to share any assistance you may need to care for and keep the child or young person safe.

Some families need help figuring out child care, while other families may need assistance creating a safe visitation plan, and some children have medical, educational, or emotional needs that must be assessed or treated.

At every meeting, the child or young person's permanency will be addressed – are they living in a home that is meant to be permanent? If so, what needs to happen to make sure the child or young person can stay? If they are not in a permanent home, what barriers are preventing permanency? What can be done to overcome those barriers?

Once a plan has been agreed upon to meet the child's specific needs, it is written up and meeting participants sign it as a commitment to follow through with the plan goals and tasks. You will receive a copy of the plan. For more information on Family Group Decision Making, please contact Elizabeth Pontz at Elizabeth.pontz@dfps.state.tx.us or (512) 438-4773.

Keeping Children and Youth Safe

Safe Sleep



Each year, about 4,000 infants die unexpectedly during sleep time from Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS), accidental suffocation or unknown causes. Here are things you can do to ensure safe sleep:

- The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends against having a baby sleep in bed with you. Although some cultures endorse co-sleeping, there is a risk the baby can suffocate or strangle, and there's a higher risk of SIDS. Additionally, CPS policy prohibits co-sleeping. So, to keep your child as safe as possible, do not co-sleep with any child younger than 5.
- Do not place items in the crib or bassinet that interfere with baby's breathing – like plush toys, pillows, blankets, and bumper pads.
- Avoid items with cords, ties, or ribbons that can wrap around a baby's neck, and objects with a sharp edge or corner.
- Avoid using mobiles. Babies can also get tangled in hanging mobiles and items that a baby can touch from a standing position in the crib, such as wall hangings, drapes, and window blind cords.
- Healthy infants should be placed on their backs to sleep. Babies sleeping on their stomachs may have a greater tendency toward sleep obstruction, rebreathing their own carbon dioxide, and suffocating.

Water Safety



It is starting to get hot in Texas again and the pools and lakes are opening for the summer. Here are some reminders about water safety:

> Kids need constant supervision around water — whether it is in a bathtub, pool, fish pond, spa, the beach, or a lake. Young

children are especially vulnerable — they can drown in less than two inches of water. That means drowning can happen where you'd least expect — sink, toilet bowl, fountains, buckets, inflatable pools, or small bodies of standing water around your home.

- Don't assume that a child who knows how to swim isn't at risk for drowning. All kids need supervision in the water. Infants, toddlers, and weak swimmers should have an adult swimmer within arm's reach to provide "touch supervision."
- Use proper-fitting, Coast
 Guard-approved life vests. For
 kids younger than 5, choose a
 vest with a strap between the
 legs and head support.
 Inflatable vests and arm devices
 such as water wings are not
 effective protection against
 drowning.

Gun Safety



The number of kids and teens who die from gunshot wounds has risen almost 60 percent in the past 10 years. Most fatal firearm accidents occur when

children and teens discover loaded firearms at home.

Because of the serious risk of firearm-related death and injury to children and teenagers, caregivers must take extra precaution to ensure that no child or teen in their home has access to a firearm. The decision to have a firearm comes with an enormous responsibility. Be fully informed about the risks of firearms to your family and others who visit your home. If you own a gun, CPS requires you to:

- Unload it and lock it away.
- Store and lock ammunitions separately.
- Hide keys where children cannot find them.
- Teach young children not to touch guns, and to tell an adult if they find one.

Frequent Visitors



State law (Human Resource Code Chapter 42.056) requires DFPS to run background checks on people who frequently visit the homes where children in CPS custody reside.

"Frequent visitor" is defined as an individual who is frequently present at

the home, meaning more than two noncontinuous visits in a 30-day period; one continuous stay per year that lasts more than seven days; or more than two continuous stays per year that lasts more than 48 hours each.

The purpose of this law is to protect children from people who have criminal or CPS backgrounds that would prevent them from being around children and from those that would endanger them.

If you have questions about a person being considered a frequent visitor or requiring a background check, ask yourself:

- Is this person responsible for caring for the child (e.g. a babysitter)?
- Is the person likely to have unsupervised access to my child?
- Does the person have access to the home? (Does the person have a key or the freedom to come and go at will?)
- Is there reason to believe the person might have a criminal history or a history of child abuse or neglect?

The background check requirements are for people who frequently visit the home, not those who have frequent contact outside the home. If you still have questions about frequent visitors, speak with your kinship development worker. If you do not have one assigned, speak with the child's caseworker.





Dayana Alcazar Johnson began working as a Child Protective Services investigator in May 2002. She later worked as a Family Group Conference facilitator for two years when FGC and Kinship were in the same program in Region 3. She transferred to a kinship development worker position in March 2008. Johnson is bilingual in English and Spanish, and she earned her Master's Degree in Social Work while working in the Kinship program. Johnson provides kinship services primarily in Denton and Wise counties and has worked with Spanish- speaking clients in various counties in the region. She is a great advocate for her families, providing timely services and support, and often works nights and weekends to accommodate their schedules.

Johnson is dedicated to ensuring that *all* kinship families in Denton County get similar community support and CPS services. Denton County has an annual Kinship Fall Fair, a fun-filled day with games, coat drive, gifts and other needed items to children in kinship

placements whose legal cases are from Denton County. This left a gap for kinship families living in the community with children placed from other counties or regions. Johnson worked with the Denton County Disproportionality Board to organize Winter Wonderland for these kinship caregivers and children. For three years, this wonderful event has provided gifts for the children, pictures with Santa, a bounce house, balloon clown, games, and lunch for the kinship families and children. The event is a result of Johnson's passion for kinship care work and dedication to families and children.

SAFETY TIPS

- Do not use drop-side cribs. Malfunctioning hardware and poor assembly can cause the drop-side to fall and create a dangerous gap that infants and toddlers can fall into and become stuck.
- Place plastic caps on all unused electrical outlets, including those on the end of extension cords. They will stop your child from sticking anything into the outlet or sucking on an exposed extension cord.
- Install safety gates at the top and bottom of stairs if you have babies or toddlers in your house. Don't use accordion gates with large openings. A child's neck can be trapped in an opening.
- ❖ Young children will put anything in their mouths, even if it tastes bad. Medicines, make-up, cleaning and garden products, and plants cause most home poisonings. Children 5 and younger are most at risk.

RESOURCES

- Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Texas Kincare Primer
- Texas Department of Aging and Disability Services Caregiver Support
- Seneca Center for Children and Families
- Grandparents Raising Grandchildren USA.gov.
- > The Grandfamilies State Law and Policy Resource Center
- GrandsPlace
- National Kinship Alliance for Children
- FoodPantries.org

FREE TRAINING: Cenpatico University, Foster Care EDU

Kinship Quarterly Strengthening Families





Report abuse, neglect, or exploitation of children, the elderly, or people with disabilities at (800) 252-5400 or https://www.txabusehotline.org.